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ABSTRACT

Through an exploration of the literature base, this paper focuses on structural and environmental dimensions of faculty development. It concludes by presenting a developmental mindset based on students, teaching, and knowledge that is framed in a structure of collegiality, service, and self-renewal. Such a mindset is difficult to maintain because it does not allow individual faculty members to remain in comfort zones for long periods of time. The personal accountability of faculty members becomes the driving force behind sustained quality. Such an approach is more likely to be successful than external efforts forced on faculty. (Contains 10 references.) (SLD)

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Strategies for Making Faculty Development an Institutional Priority

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Abstract

Institutional quality is highly correlated to faculty quality, and as a result, institutions must make efforts to develop their faculty. Through an exploration of the literature base, the current discussion focuses on structural and environmental dimensions to faculty development. The discussion concludes in offering a developmental mindset based on students, teaching, and knowledge and framed in a structure of collegiality, service, and self-renewal.

Institutional viability is tied directly to the quality of faculty. Although many state agencies may look to a quantitative approach of generating a greater number of credit hours or products served as a measure of success, these types of relatively superficial criteria are not effective or particularly useful in determining whether or not a college is truly a quality organization. Often institutions will rely on their middle-level managers to make a difference in the quality of teaching. This type of argument has been advocated and reinforced by many, including Seagren, Wheeler, Creswell, Miller, and Van Horn (1994) and in much of the work of the National Community College Chair Academy.

As institutions face the difficulty of constructing meaningful activities structured around an existing rubric of rewards and merit pay, the idea of making real faculty, staff, and professional development a priority is problematic and challenging at best. Community college administrators are often focused on institutional and curricular outcomes for students, and find merit in numbers that can easily and effectively identify the success of programs in student work placement or transferability.

Faculty Development as an Institutional Issue

Tien and Blackburn (1996) studied the system of faculty ranks as related to research motivation and productivity, in which they investigated and explored the questions of how academic promotion motivated research behavior. The findings of the study indicated that the assistant professors did not publish less than the associate professors, the associate professors showed the least variation in productivity, and full professors, though not all, were the most productive faculty. The reason for this, they

claimed, was that assistant and associate professors who stayed in the rank longer than an average of six years were less productive than other colleagues in the same ranks, and that the longer faculty members stayed in a rank, the less likely they were to be promoted. However, things were different for full professors. For full professors, salary increases and peer recognition, pure enjoyment, continuing dedication to search for truths and to share them via the accepted outlet of journals and conferences, continued to operate during the full professorship for them. Tien and Blackburn concluded that rewards such as promotion may have different meanings and motivational effects on faculty members, and such an inquiry would more fully explain faculty attitudes and behaviors in relation to their research productivity.

Halford (1994) studied faculty morale and attached great importance to the enhancement of faculty morale even in times of diminishing resources and challenges. One of the causes that led to low faculty morale, as found in Paducah (Kentucky) Community College, was low self-esteem. Halford found that teachers who believed that they were treated with respect and valued as professionals were more effective than those who did not believe so. Halford suggested that in times of limited resources, enhanced self-esteem and shared governance would provide the tools to reshape existing resources for a more effective learning environment.

Dayhaw-Barker (1994) particularly noted that labor-preparation mechanisms (e.g. graduate preparation programs) need to promote concepts of life-long learning. The more immediate need lies in the ability of an institution to offer effective and meaningful faculty development programs, noting the sabbatical as one such mechanism to jump start a revitalization effort. Other types of programs identified were institutional sharing of

faculty, summer workshops, fellowships, residencies, and other clinical experiences where faculty could build ownership in their own developmental activities.

Kalivoda, Sorrell, and Simpson (1994) addressed the significance of faculty vitality as a critical ingredient in sustaining the vitality of institutions. Their study was intended to identify the common attitudes, beliefs, and values of faculty members at a research university and to determine how these factors fluctuated over the course of the faculty member's career, so that faculty development efforts might be better tailored to meet the distinctive career-stage needs of the professorate. Through their study, they found that research-university faculty at the assistant, associate, and full professor levels shared many common attitudes, beliefs, and values about the academic career. At the same time, differences were revealed across the three career stages.

New and junior faculty placed a different emphasis on academic career goals and experienced more acute levels of stress and frustration than did mid- and senior-career faulty members. Three areas were outlined in the study where new and junior faculty could have benefited from faculty development. They included activities designed to enhance teaching skills and teaching styles; mentoring relationships with senior faculty which can facilitate the building of collegiality; and activities to promote scholarly productivity and to develop writing skills.

For mid-career faculty, activities aimed at preventing becoming professionally stuck and programs to sustain vitality were suggested, which included career development workshops, instructional grants programs, and sabbaticals, as mid-career faculty, they found, perceived themselves to be at the peak of concern about reputation and recognition, which could lead to professional burnout and dissatisfaction.

For senior faculty, the study reported that they needed to rejuvenate their sense of professional vitality by engaging in opportunities to sharpen research and scholarship skills in their discipline or related fields.

Kalivoda, Sorrell, and Simpson concluded that faculty can sustain and enhance their professional vitality by engaging in various faculty development activities targeted to their career stages, and can benefit from those activities which bring them together to discuss issues of teaching and scholarship in a collegial and intellectually challenging environment.

Also in 1994, D'Cruz-Endeley studied the faculty development needs of faculty at Rima College in Malaysia. Using the Hunter-Beyen faculty development needs assessment survey, as revised by the researcher, she achieved a 95% response rate (n=62), and found that faculty most desired training on productivity, credibility in serving as a lecturer, and teaching expertise. Administrators at the college believed that their faculty needed training on instructional performance, classroom management, and course and teaching evaluations. Although faculty were found to prefer workshops, seminars, and getting materials from their library, professional associations were cited as a potential major contributing factor in faculty development delivery, and incentives for development identified as desirable were merit pay, release time, and sabbaticals.

Neumann and Finaly-Neumann (1990) studied faculty members' commitment to their employing university, based on career stage and level of productivity, and additionally, assessed the relative powers of rewards and support variables, using a stratified random sample of 40 research university departments. The findings suggested that the reward-support framework played a meaningful role in determining faculty

commitment to their employing universities and that support indicators were more important in predicting faculty commitment. They also indicated that career stage and research productivity had little or no direct effect on faculty commitment.

Morrow and McElroy (1987) studied three career stage categories, including age, organizational tenure, and positional tenure. Using Department of Transportation employees as study subjects, 4,000 employees were surveyed about work commitment and job satisfaction. With 2,200 responses, little impact was found from career stage operationalization and work commitment and job satisfaction. Chronological age was determined to account for the majority of the variance among work measures (job involvement, organizational commitment, work ethic endorsement, and intention to stay at the current employment) and job satisfaction factors (using the job descriptive index developed by Smith in the 1960s). These findings have an applicability to other occupations and careers where age and the length of time in employment can be related to job performance and satisfaction (i.e., college faculty).

Slocum and Cron (1985) conducted a study that was designed to investigate the relationship between three career stages - trial, stabilization, and maintenance, and work attitudes and behaviors. The results of their study suggested that career stages affect attitudes and job behaviors. People in the trial stage of their career tended to shift jobs more frequently and had a greater propensity to relocate and leave their present employers to find the right job if it meant a promotion. In the stabilization stage, people stopped exploring different occupational choices but had typically moved between companies and jobs to advance in their chosen occupations. The third stage, the

maintenance career stage, was a time for leveling off in terms of career aspirations and advancement.

Based on 532 interviews with "rank-and-file" faculty members and administrators, Schuster and Brown (1985) studied the faculty's condition. In their study, they traced recent changes in the quality of faculty life and assessed the consequences of these changes for the future of higher education and sought to describe shifts in the faculty's demographic characteristics, compensation, work environment, status, and morale, and in the quality of newly recruited faculty. The findings of their study revealed that between 1970 and 1983, the faculty experienced a sharp decline in salary and at the same time noted a deterioration of quality in the faculty work environment. In addition, as a result of inflation, the academic labor market had been severely affected, with relatively few job openings in most academic fields. They found, as a result of these unfavorable situations a weakening of faculty morale on almost all campuses, where the performance of a dispirited faculty, stressed and anxious about the future, had led to the loss of faculty vitality. They suggested that because of the declining faculty vitality, students showed less interest in pursuing academic careers, the proportion of the students selecting academic career had fallen off steeply, and preference for academic careers had dropped sharply. Furthermore, higher education institutions had difficulty hiring outstanding new faculty members to meet the needs of higher education advancement.

Structural Dimensions

A primary concern for faculty members, and indeed an issue that has bearing on faculty recruitment, is the formal support that an institution can or does provide to faculty. By structural dimensions, reference is given to the implements and activities that

are either sanctioned or formally offered as a matter of policy and practice by the institution. The concept of structure permeates the institution and reflects the values of the college. How the dimensions are coordinated and funded are the challenges for college leaders.

A comprehensive community college in the mid-west provides a good example of how a structure encourages faculty development. Reporting to the dean of academics is a coordinator who works with a faculty development council to identify in-service training programs and distributes professional development mini-grants of $500 to help faculty pay for travel and attendance at conferences. The council also holds an informational meeting about how to apply for a sabbatical. During a recent academic year, the council held monthly programs that were facilitated or taught by the coordinator. These topics include:

- Alternative teaching evaluation
- Time management
- Evaluating student advising
- Technology use in teaching
- Using electronic mail and the internet in class
- Effective participation in professional associations
- Creating in-class readers and text book selection
- Developing individual program of faculty development

Although attendance at these programs was identified as sporadic, each faculty member was strongly encouraged by the academic dean to create and file an annual professional development program. Faculty did not receive additional compensation for

this filing, but they were given time away from campus and on-campus resources to create and implement these plans. Support such as long-distance telephone privileges, secretarial support, and resource purchases (such as books and videos) were all provided by the institution.

Other structural considerations might include evaluating faculty based on development plans or efforts, incorporating faculty development as part of the faculty member's annual assignment, providing additional compensation for certain development activities, providing resources for self-improvement and renewal, and offering group opportunities for development. The concept to be stressed by the institution is specifically that faculty quality is important, and the institution is willing to do whatever it will take to empower faculty to do a good job and to keep their skills current.

Environmental Dimensions

Perhaps the hardest single element in creating an atmosphere that values faculty development is the creation of a collective attitude that sees, feels, and believes that professional development is a common, normal way of conducting and living a faculty career. Professional development takes effort, and this effort must be the product of both administrative caring and individual interest. In a sense, both parties need to find a way to get something out of the developmental activity or plan. With the sabbatical, for instance, faculty get something real and memorable; paid time away from campus to pursue an individual area of interest. Administrators encounter something real as well: intended improved expertise or practice.

The fundamental notion for an environment of valued faculty development is consensus of opinion, belief, and values. The subsequent challenge to both

administrators and faculty, then, is how consensus is reached. Most community colleges rely on a negotiated value of faculty development, notably expecting division heads and departmental chairs to recognize the value of different types of experiences and programs. Without making faculty development a requirement, an activity that could well serve as a disparaging characteristic, a college must find a way to permeate the value of professional growth to those who comprise the college environment. A wide range of activities are available, that might include:

- Providing awards to faculty who exceed baseline expectations of professional development
- Allowing students and alumni an opportunity to see what is happening with professional development
- Allowing broad freedom to faculty to determine their own developmental activities
- Encouraging program unit chairs or heads to make development a priority with faculty
- Expecting professional development plans from all faculty from the day they are hired through retirement
- Highlighting creative development plans among faculty in a visible manner, such as an all college faculty newsletter.

Effective faculty development only happens when there is community buy-in, and this presents a real challenge to community college administrators. Like an un-funded mandate, leaders must find ways to support faculty growth and development as the life and quality of the institution are entirely dependent upon the success of faculty.

The Developmental Mindset

There are a variety of strategies that encourage faculty to embrace development as a way of life, but the most effective is creating caring about lifelong learning while in preparation programs. Community college faculty are unique in that there are few formal training programs, and those that do exist tend to emphasize teaching excellence and content knowledge as rather a holistic approach to creating a caring educator. If they were to change, though, and if colleges were to accept the need for a fluid, constantly changing and improving faculty, what would the core component of a developmental mindset include?

A community college in the southeast included six factors as part of their developmental mindset. In essence, each faculty member must believe in:

Students: students are the heart of an institution and require respect. Faculty, in accepting a role as facilitator, must keep in mind and deed the importance of students in their daily activities, particularly in areas of advisement.

Teaching: the central role of the college is providing instruction through formal and informal teaching. Faculty must have a commitment to offering quality instruction both in and outside (such as advising student organizations and advising students) of the classroom. At least one institution has fully adopted the American Association for Higher Education's principles for good teaching (see Appendix 5).

Knowledge: keeping current and proficient in academic disciplines is of vital importance to faculty members. As a result, keeping abreast of literature, membership in professional associations, and keeping conversant with colleagues are important aspects of the faculty life.

Collegiality: a fundamental aspect of the faculty life is a strong sense of teamwork and collegiality among teachers. Being an industry based on human capital, an ability to 'get-along' must permeate the actions, beliefs, and values of faculty.

Service: faculty must have a responsibility to operation of the institution, and must act trustworthy and responsibly for the welfare of the institution.

Renewal: faculty must be able to recognize their shortcomings and areas for further growth, and believe that it is important to make real efforts to improve performance.

The developmental mindset is difficult to maintain, largely because it does not allow individual faculty members to fall into comfort zone for long periods of time. Faculty, as teachers, are forced to maintain a higher level of accountability to themselves as compared to others, and this personal accountability is the driving force behind maintained quality. External efforts forced upon faculty probably have a lower likelihood for success, simply because they are forced on the faculty. This simple assumption, being that which is self-initiated carries greater personal self-acceptance, is at the very heart of what makes the sabbatical work. With self-defined and crafted strategies, highly intelligent faculty are in control of their own developmental activities. Successful administrators will in turn encourage these types of activities, but will also keep an eye on the external quality control mechanisms described, and find a way to empower faculty in their efforts. The developmental mindset is the result of an institutional set of core values and beliefs, and one individual alone can not change an institution's culture. Strong leaders can have an institutional impact, but part of their success over time is the hiring and promoting of individuals with an attitude that values

renewal. The second part of the result is collective buy-in by faculty, administrators, and staff. Only by recognizing the broad nature of faculty development and the idea of quality, can community colleges continue to break new ground, be centers of educational innovation, and continue to lead the higher education industry.

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